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challenge

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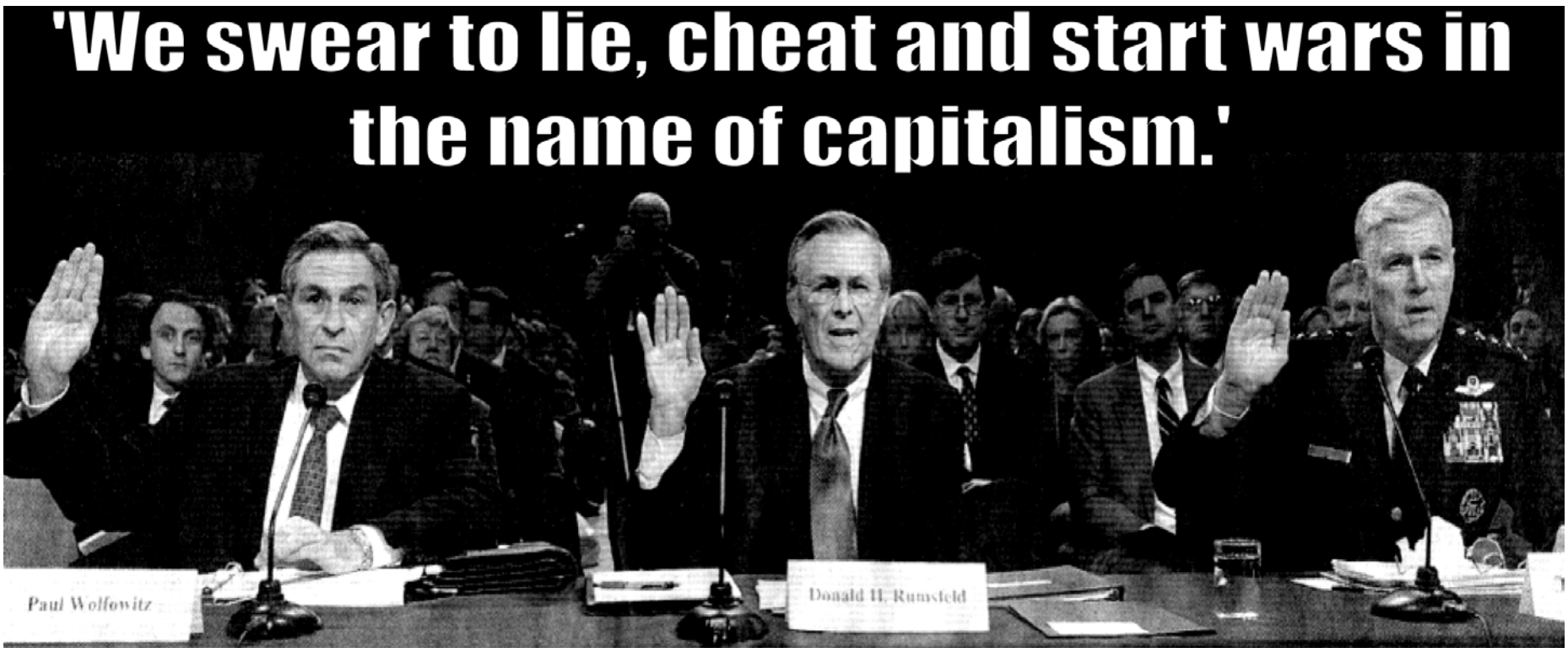

BUSH OR KERRY?

TWO SIDES OF SAME WAR COIN

Democrats openly supported invading Iraq as long ago as 1998. Al Gore made forcible "regime change" a key plank in his 2000 presidential platform. But now the dominant, liberal wing of U.S. rulers is pushing the election-year big lie that the current mess is all George Bush's fault. That's the phony message coming from the reports of the 9/11 Commission, especially from Richard Clarke's testimony and best-selling book "Against All Enemies,". Clarke, a terrorism advisor to Reagan, Bush, Sr., Clinton, and Bush, Jr. says the Iraq war seriously hinders the fight against Al Qaeda. But the rulers' chief gripe with Bush is that he went to war with insufficient resources and preparation. With more and bigger wars on the horizon, U.S. imperialism needs a president who can round up more allies abroad and militarize the masses at home.

Thomas Kean and Viacom, pillars of the U.S. imperialist establishment, put Clarke's criticism of Bush on the front page. Kean is the aristocratic, Rockefeller Republican ex-governor of New Jersey who heads the 9/11 Commission (see box page 2). Viacom, whose Simon and Schuster unit published Clarke's book recently elected liberal big shots William Cohen and Joseph Califano to its board. As Clinton's "Defense" Secretary, Cohen supervised the U.S. Air Force's slaughter of thousands of Serbians. Califano was Lyndon Johnson's domestic affairs advisor, a job that often entailed using armed troops against anti-war protesters and rebelling black workers. Today, he calls for restoring the draft. [See box page 2.]

Clarke blames Bush and Clinton for not preventing 9/11. But the 1999 Hart-Rudman report makes it clear that, as much as they feared a terrorist attack on U.S. soil, U.S. rulers actually hoped that such an attack would "galvanize" people and make them "ready to sacrifice blood and treasure" in the rulers' interest. Bush's shortcoming — for the rulers — was his half-hearted response. He blew a chance to institute full-blown fascism. In May 2001, Bush hired Richard Falkenrath, a Harvard professor, as his top terrorism expert. In late 2000, Falkenrath wrote a list of recommendations in the event of a large-scale terrorist attack that makes the Patriot Act look tame. He said the government would have the authority to:

•Impose a state of emergency, including curfew;

•Compel people to remain in one location or move to another, including temporary detention;

•Use the military for domestic law enforcement and population control;

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SAN FRANCISCO MUNI DRIVERS CONFRONT HOMELAND SECURITY TERRORISTS

SAN FRANCISCO, CA — "What does a terrorist look like?" asked the teacher at MUNI's Security Awareness Class. "George Bush," answered a PLP bus driver. MUNI made these classes mandatory for all workers in October, November and December 2003. Total Security Services International (TSSI) and Battelle Memorial Institute (Battelle), two mercenary-style outfits in the lucrative field of Homeland Security, ran the classes. The teachers all have resumés with the Delta Force, and covert operations with U.S. and British imperialism. Battelle recently made retired Gen. Charles Wilhelm (38 years in the Marine Corps, commander of the U.S. Southern command) head of their Homeland Security Division.

MUNI has also joined an FBI-run anti-terrorist information system. The PLP driver kept hammering away: "Are you going to turn names over to the FBI of anyone who says things you don't like? You worked in covert operations for British intelligence, didn't you? What is [your] position on racial profiling of Muslims? Do you think that strikes by transit workers should be considered acts of terrorism?"

In another class, the teacher used a series of statistics about deaths and bombings that had occurred on busses. A PLP driver challenged him: "Do these figures include how many people the Israeli Army has killed, or how many children died from U.S. sanctions in Iraq, how many civilians have been killed in Afghanistan?" "I did not make these figures," the teacher squealed. "Battle produced them. I'm neutral…We don't do racial profiling…" Yet every statistic and visual was about the Middle East.

He told a story about actor James Woods feeling very uncom-

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BUSH AND KERRY: BOTH DEADLY FOR WORKERS

continued from front page

•Seize community or private property;
•Compel individuals to be quarantined;
•Censor and control the media;
•Liberalize standards for conducting searches and seizures;
• Compel civilian public servants to work.

Bush followed only part of the liberals' fascist game plan. Kerry appears more eager. Supporting either would be a lethal mistake for workers. A more rational choice is to join and build the Progressive Labor Party, which is dedicated to destroying the murderous ruling class that Bush, Kerry, Kean and Clarke all serve.✪

Winds of War: Getting 'Drafty'

The question, "Will the draft be restored?" has three answers: probably not right now; in the near term, perhaps; and in the long term, surely, but not in its old form. Michael O'Hanlon, a military analyst at the Brookings Institute recently wrote an essay called "The Need to Increase the Size of the Deployable Army." Weighing the draft's unpopularity, both with the public and among generals who would have to command unwilling troops, O'Hanlon concludes, "the draft is not the answer." But, he concedes, "Some day this assessment could change, [after] a sustained period of high casualties in Iraq or another place. At that point, to maintain a viable military, the nation might have no option but to consider the draft." Endorsing John Kerry's fascist "Army of Patriots" scheme, O'Hanlon favors "mandatory national service of some kind, with the military being one option from which individuals could choose."

The Pentagon is already on the job. "Richard Flahavan, a spokesman for the Selective Service System, said planning for a possible draft of linguists and computer experts had begun last fall after Pentagon personnel officials said the military needed more people with skills in those areas...The agency already has in place a special system to register and draft health care personnel ages 20 to 44 in more than 60 specialties if necessary in a crisis." (San Francisco Chronicle, 3/13/04)

The U.S. military, the mightiest and deadliest in history, has an Achilles' heel. Ultimately, it will not be able function without working-class draftees who have no interest in serving it and are likely to rebel against it ✪

CONFLICT OF INTEREST?

Who would have thought that the chairman of the 9/11 Commission mandated to investigate the terror attack on the World Trade Center has business ties to the brother-in-law and alleged financier of Osama bin Laden?

Commission chairmanThomas Kean is a director of the Amerada Hess oil company, which is a partner in the Hess-Delta Corporation, a joint venture established in 1998 for the development and exploration of oil fields in the Caspian Sea region. Hess-Delta is also an equity holder in the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhon oil pipeline. Hess's partner in this venture, Delta Oil of Saudi Arabia, is owned by powerful Saudi financier Khalid bin Mahfouz, bin Laden's brother-in-law. According to 1998 Senate testimony by then-CIA director James Woolsey, bin Laden is married to bin Mahfouz's younger sister.

In the wake of 9/11, the U.S. Treasury Dept. froze the assets of 150 Saudi individuals, companies and charities suspected of providing millions of dollars to al Qaeda. But bin Laden's brother-in-law Mahfouz was exempted.

Kean, a "moderate Republican," became Bush's choice to head the 9/11 Commission after Henry Kissinger was dumped in a "conflict-of-interest" embarrassment for representing companies like ExxonMobil doing business with Saudi oil firms.

Kean is a member of the Rockefeller-led Council on Foreign Relations, and was selected because the former Governor of New Jersey was "close to the families of the 9/11 victims, an important credential to the White House." (Scripps-Howard News Service, 12/17/02) The Baltimore Sun (12/26/02) hailed him as one who "lacks obvious conflicts of interests."

But a $1 trillion law suit filed last August by families of the 9/11 victims lists Khalid bin Mahfouz, Kean's business partner, as an alleged "financier" of al Qaeda.✪

Navy Red Confident Sailors Can Be Won to Oppose Bosses

The fight against capitalism/imperialism has entered a new stage. The ruling class is incorporating identity politics into its basic line. I've seen this in my Navy training. Much of civil rights, women rights, and even gay rights are becoming official Navy doctrine. I've been trying to show my fellow sailors how misleading this can be.

Unlike the past, the military is using many aspects of the social justice movements of the last 50 years. It's celebrating Black History and Women's History month; integrating almost every form of religious worship for its troops; reinforcing both white and black nationalism — all to better carry out the ruling class's imperialist designs. Any division among politicians today is just over tactics needed to help the ruling class maximize its profits.

We must win workers away from all forms of nationalism; fight religious ideas which obscure our understanding and often divide us, using materialist analysis — all to unify our class. We must see ourselves as workers, as soldiers of the working class, not as black or women or Latino soldiers.

We must win workers in the military away from the narrow viewpoint one of our officers expressed recently, of supporting the Republicans because they give us pay increases (not that the Democrats would be any improvement).

Since I've had some great experiences with workers in the Navy. I've even been able to get CHALLENGE to some of them. Here are six examples of worker/soldiers we can win:

• As a child participated in Equal Rights Amendment marches with his mother. Has a sister fighting for Dennis Kucinich. Liberal politics, but winnable.

• An atheist who was kicked out of his mother's house for denouncing God. Was raised a Mormon.

• Participant in a five month fight against Wal-Mart and scabs to help his mother win her job back. Went to jail several times as a result.

• An anti-capitalist who loves Lenin.

• A Louisianan who had friends in the Klan. Did not understand at first why we need to study Black History. At end of boot camp, he had grown to like a black peer (me!) who openly espoused the teaching and learning of the history of black workers' struggles and wanted to stay in touch with me.

• Former nazi in high school, but has changed a lot, learned from the movie "Bowling for Columbine." Very much questions the system, the reasons for invading Iraq. Thought Trent Lott and Strom Thurmond were not racists, but changed his mind upon hearing Thurmond had a black child with the family servant. Unsure about his winnability, but he sure hates the system!

Black workers in general have been the most distrustful of the system, joined the Navy to escape jail, poverty and lack of opportunity. Double consciousness must be fought — there should be no eating of imperialist pie in exchange for our loyalty to their system. We must destroy it and get the entire pie for the world's workers.

The potential to win workers — within the most powerful military on earth — to a working-class movement is there. We must keep our eye on the ball. On to May Day!

Navy Red

WHAT WE FIGHT FOR

✪PLP fights to smash capitalism—wage slavery. While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim "communism is dead," capitalism is the real failure for billions all over the world. The Soviet Union and China returned to capitalism because socialism maintained too many aspects of the profit system, like wages and divisions of labor.

✪Capitalism inevitably leads to wars. PLP organizes workers, students and soldiers to turn these wars into a revolution for communism. This fight for the dictatorship of the proletariat requires a mass Red Army led by the communist PLP.

✪Communism means working collectively to build a society where sharing is based on need. We will abolish work for wages, money and profit. Everyone will share society's benefits and burdens.

✪Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of race.

✪Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women workers.

✪Communism means abolishing nations and nationalism. One international working class, one world, one Party.

✪Communism means the Party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers — eventually everyone — must become communist organizers.

JOIN US!

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Boeing 7E7 Giveaway Shows:

Workers Must Fight Bosses' Dictatorship

Washington State Governor Gary Locke said the recent $3.2 billion giveaway to Boeing demonstrates the state is "open for business in a way we have never been before." Just how open we'll never know because Locke sealed the records. Nevertheless, a few leaked details show the state plans to dole out our tax dollars to big business "six ways to Sunday," exposing the government's class nature as it has "never been before."

Democracy at Work!

Apparently, liberal Democrat Locke paid Deloitte Consulting $715,000 to formulate the bribe to land the Boeing 7E7 Dreamliner assembly plant. Boeing is a $5 million client of this same firm. Deloitte and Touche, another arm of the New York-based Deloitte financial empire, is the company's outside auditor. Together, the Deloitte companies have made over $50 million in fees from Boeing since 2001, according to the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (Seattle Weekly, 2/18). Who better to give the state "objective, independent" advice than Boeing's own paid consultants?

"Not only did the [state] do all we asked them to do, they also fixed other things," bragged Deloitte's local boss Tom Captain to the weekly Mercer Island Rerporter (Business Week, 3/18). The "other things fixed" include kicking mostly-Latin farmworkers off unemployment compensation in an atrociously racist fashion; weakening workers' compensation; and secret deals to fund a Boeing training center, reinforce the runway so the company can fly in outsourced sub-assemblies and pave a road to a proposed subcontractor plant near final assembly. Our tax dollars are literally paving the road to cheap labor.

To ward off complaints about this sweetheart deal, the state is also paying for state employees to advise Boeing how to defend itself against lawsuits and take advantage of other lucrative loopholes in the state tax code.

Opening up Minds

Last year, the Boeing union leadership campaigned in support of the company's demands, rallying under the slogan, "We Can Do It!" "These might as well have been Deloitte and Touche rallies," said an angry Machinist, when the news broke about these consultants. Two shop stewards were particularly mad. They had honestly supported the union leadership, despite all our misgivings. Now they felt betrayed.

The capitalist crisis of overproduction in aerospace, as well as the rise of imperialist competitors like Europe's Airbus and others, has forced the bosses' hand. Their need to maximize profits has now become obscenely apparent. The ugly face of class dictatorship, embodied in governmental power, has been more openly employed.

Many workers, like these two shop stewards, are now more open to our communist politics. The bosses' naked use of state power to finance their profits can help lead to the communist-led movement necessary to defeat this boss-government-consultant gang-up, but only if we build a base for PLP and CHALLENGE. Economic crises and corruption by themselves can lead to mass cynicism and workers marching behind yet another set of politicians.

We Can Learn From Past Mistakes and We Can Win!

The old communist movement collapsed because of concessions to capitalism. One was the incorrect notion of separating the state apparatus from the Party, undermining the understanding that government is the embodiment of class dictatorship. Despite heroic efforts and great accomplishments — like the organizing of industrial unions — ideological weaknesses like this eventually did in the old movement.

Now we must build a movement, no matter how long it takes, that holds no illusions about class dictatorship and the government, which the rulers hide behind pious hosannas to democracy. There is no answer short of smashing the bosses' dictatorship with the rule of the working class led directly by its Party.

Last year, the bosses and their labor union lieutenants had their "We Can Do It!" campaign, with devastating results. This summer, the union will compound this mis-leadership by campaigning for John Kerry, spreading the illusion that workers can "vote the bosses out of power." We must answer with a bold campaign — in the union and on the shop floor — that lays bare the bosses' dictatorship. The ball is in our court!✪

Mussolini Would Have Been Proud

As we go to press, the Seattle Times (2/27) reports, "Boeing received pledges from the state's leading politicians to help it smooth the way with its employees to implement radical changes to its production processes that would enable it to produce the 7E7 with fewer workers and at unprecedented speed.

"Gov. Gary Locke, Sen. Maria Cantwell, Sen. Patty Murray and Rep. Norm Dicks, all Democrats, pledged to help Boeing navigate the changes with its workforce in a letter to Boeing Commercial Airplanes CEO Alan Mulally on Sept. 15.

"'Finding new ways to improve efficiency and productivity will require a true partnership between labor, Boeing and the state of Washington,' the letter said. 'We understand that the discussions needed to achieve these goals could prove challenging. Each one of us stands ready to assist in making sure these innovative ideas are realized.'"

In the years leading to World War II, the Italian fascist leader Mussolini installed what he called "a corporate state." The Democrats' vow to form a labor misleader/company/state cabal to speed us up so Boeing can cut jobs would have made Mussolini proud.✪

San Francisco Muni Drivers Confront Homeland Security Terrorists

continued from front page

fortable on a flight with three Middle Eastern men because they seemed very nervous and walked around the plane. After 9/11, the FBI came to see him and he identified three of the hijackers.

Another driver responded in disgust: "I don't believe that story. I'm always nervous when I fly. Some passengers act like they are suspicious of me because I'm black. In racist America, anyone non-white on a plane gets 'the eye.' This government has been terrorizing black people for hundreds of years. That is the real terror we've got to watch out for."

Many workers complained that these ridiculous scenarios had nothing to do with the real security issues at MUNI: no lighting at terminals at night or around drivers' bathrooms, no station agents in some MUNI Metro (subway) stations and much more. "The main thing is the budget cutbacks," said one worker.

MARCH ON MAY DAY 2004!
Saturday May 1st
FIGHT AGAINST IMPERIALIST WAR FOR OIL
STOP FASCIST DEPORTATIONS
SMASH RACISM AND SEXISM
FIGHT FOR COMMUNISM!
WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE!
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MUNI applied for a $2.4 million grant from the Department of Justice in compliance with the Homeland Security Department to conduct a "Security Awareness Training Program." That could buy a lot of bathrooms! Market researchers estimate that 170 companies are competing for their share of the $100 billion Homeland Security pie. The recent bombings in Madrid show there's no way to protect mass transit from terrorist attacks, so this money is a total waste, except for building fear. One driver commented, "To stop this threat of attacks against us, you have to change our foreign policy…and that would take a revolution."

U.S. rulers need to squeeze the working class to pay for their world empire. To compete with Europe, Russia and China, they need a passive, divided work force that will give up wages, medical and pension benefits. They want to make workers forget who the real enemy is. A fearful and passive work force helps the bosses impose a police state like the Patriot Act.

Someone said, "I wish I had said something in class because the teacher made derogatory comments about Irish people. I wish I had gone to the class you were in." Other comments ranged from, "I hate these people. They are such fascists," to "This is like Nazi Germany." Our leadership gave confidence to many who already oppose growing fascism and U.S. imperialism. This, along with our other struggles and political involvement with drivers, is helping to spread the Party's influence. The stage is set for a sharper fightback when our contract expires in June. Stay tuned.✪

The Further Balkanization of Kosovo

During the 1999 bombing of the former Yugoslavia, Clinton-Blair-Gen. Wes Clark-Chirac-Schröder & Co. claimed they were making war against Milosevic and the Yugoslav government because Serb nationalists were carrying out "ethnic cleansing" against Albanians in Kosovo. But the real cause of the war was Milosevic and his gang's plans for an oil and gas pipeline from the Caspian region to Western Europe, which conflicted with U.S. and Western Europe bosses' plans. However, just like Bush's WMDs, the ethnic cleansing of Albanians was exposed as a big lie. The Albanians in Kosovo began to flee en masse when U.S.-NATO planes dropped their bombs.

Kosovo is nominally part of Serbia and Montenegro but has been administered by the local UN mission since the 1999 war. It's now home for 7,000 U.S. military personnel at Bondsteel, one of the largest U.S. military bases overseas.

Serbs comprise only 10% of the Kosovo population; the rest are Albanians. In mid-March, racist riots erupted in Mitrovica and Pristina, 28 people died and 500 houses and 42 Serbian Orthodox churches and monasteries were destroyed. Some 3,500 Serbians were forced to flee their homes.

Major Tim Dunne, a Kfor (UN forces in Kosovo) spokesman, said the mob violence had been carefully orchestrated. "We stopped numerous buses carrying men aged 18 to 40 from going to Mitrovica," he told the London Telegraph (3/29). The troops believed that the men [Albanian nationalists] were being bussed in to take part in the unrest.

The violence flared when three Albanian children drowned after allegedly being chased into a river by Serbs. Unrest spread quickly. One UN official said the "subsequent disturbances all over Kosovo, and their prolonged nature, point to widespread orchestration."

There are doubts over how the children came to drown. Suspicions grew that the blame had been wrongly placed on Serbs, an allegation made by a fourth child who survived. Yet during the violence a UN spokesman, Derek Chapple, said that police had no conclusive evidence. On March 24, senior UN mission officials ordered Chapple "moved to other duties" because he may have been "too frank."

'So nationalism has spawned unemployment, imperialist war and ethnic cleansing to the workers throughout the former Yugoslavia.'

The Albanian nationalists in Kosovo — all coming from the Kosovo Liberation Army, the drug-running gang used by the U.S./NATO during the 1999 war — are trying to divert Albanian workers and youth there from the fact that five years after "victory" unemployment is even higher, as privatized factories are barely producing and social services have been cut. Meanwhile, the coalition govt. of Kostunica, the Serb leader picked by the imperialists to dump Milosevic (now on trial in The Hague), has no answers either. The imperialists rejected the Serbian army offer to go to Kosovo to "restore order." Then the Serbian govt. backed rallies to "support Serbs in Kosovo" drew only a few thousand, mostly non-workers.

And the European Union's "solution" is to Balkanize Kosovo even more, dividing Serbs and Albanians into "cantons."

So nationalism has spawned unemployment, imperialist war and ethnic cleansing to the workers throughout the former Yugoslavia. After defeating the Nazis occupation, the Partisan movement led by Tito was able to unite all the ethnic groups of the former Yugoslavia. When Tito was alive, the various extreme nationalists were held in check. But, unfortunately, Tito was one of the first Eastern European "communists" to turn to state capitalism and then to private capitalism. When the Soviet Union imploded, the imperialists — led by Germany — used their "national liberation" movements (many led by WW II Nazi collaborators) in the various republics of the former Yugoslav Federation to divide them even further into "independent" countries. Slovenia and Croatia, the first to break away, are now basically German spheres of influence.

The seeds of working-class unity were destroyed by this deadly combination of fake leftists, nationalists and imperialists. Once Tito died, all hell broke loose. Milosevic and all the other nationalists in the former Yugoslavia used nationalism to build their base and profits. Workers in the former Yugoslavia need to unite and rebuild an internationalist communist Party to smash all the nationalists and their imperialist backers.✪

DEFEAT THE COOK COUNTY 'FEAR FACTOR'!

CHICAGO, IL, March 19 Today a delegation of about a dozen workers and doctors marched on the offices of Respiratory Therapy Director Frank Brown and hospital administrator Yogi Mahendra. We delivered petitions with more than 100 signatures demanding they stop the scheduled racist firing of seven black, licensed Respiratory Therapists and Technicians, scheduled for March 31. The petitions also demanded upgrades for the certified Indian therapists. Only after we waged a mass campaign supporting these dedicated long-term workers, forced by Stroger bosses to pass a certification test at the end of their careers, did the union start to act more aggressively.

The attacks and struggles we face go far beyond Stroger Hospital. U.S. bosses are on a mission to remain as top dog of the imperialist gang, and the international working class is being ground up in its wake.

Stroger Hospital bosses are trying to "shock and awe" workers with more write-ups, suspensions and firings. "Other duties as assigned," is the order of the day. These increased attacks signal the opening of our contract fight, and mean more racist attacks on patient health care.

The Nursing Dept. is leading the way in write-ups for being sick. After transferring from the Emergency Room, where patients wait up to 48 hours for a bed, Med-Surg. Divisional Director Greg Murphy is wreaking havoc, firing two workers and planning more.

Labor Relations boss Lavender is bolder than ever in firing workers, backed up by former SEIU union rep.-turned Labor Relations Manager Jim Dyson. In fact, former Local President Pia Davis and former Vice President Tom Brem have been well rewarded for years of loyal service to the bosses, working in management for Cook County Administration.

The majority of the world's workers live in abject poverty, facing wars and famines. In the U.S., retired steel workers are losing their pensions and health care and over 45 million live with no health insurance, as public health care providers like Stroger are whittled down to nothing. This is how the rulers are paying for their occupation of Iraqi oil fields and building a fascist Homeland Security police state.

Only communist revolution can wipe out racism, imperialist war, fascist terror, poverty, hunger, illiteracy and disease. We're the ones who do the work and create all value. Building the PLP is the best way to prepare for all the battles ahead, to develop confidence and trust in each other so we can shut Stroger down when our contract expires in November and smash the bosses' fear factor.

FLASH — As we go to press, County bosses have backed down and the terminations of the black Respiratory Therapists have been canceled! At a meeting of SEIU Local 73HC tonight, angry workers blasted the union leadership for failing to fight for them and defended PLP and the STROGER CHALLENGE newsletter. Workers from other hospitals said they need a CHALLENGE newsletter at their worksites. More next issue.✪

No Matter the Pay, It's Wage Slavery

NEW YORK CITY, March 26 Chanting, "$5.15 Is Not Enough," dozens of immigrant workers and immigrant rights activists rallied at City Hall yesterday, campaigning to change the state minimum wage. One worker declared, "The minimum wage doesn't cover anything. Poverty is going up…Everything's being cut back, and for what? For war. We don't want war."(El Diario-La Prensa, 3/26) The demonstrators said a raise would directly benefit more than 165,000 immigrant workers here.

A study by the Fiscal Policy Institute for the New York Immigration Coalition says the hourly minimum wage should be increased to $7.10. But just to reach the government's "official" poverty line of $18,000+ a year for a family would require a $9.00 hourly rate.

The minimum wage goes to the heart of capitalist exploitation. Low wages for some workers depress the wages of all, allowing the bosses to make super-profits out of the labor of the entire working class. Racism hurts ALL workers.

But a higher minimum wage won't end capitalist exploitation. Even the highest-paid workers have faced devastating attacks on wages and benefits as well as suffering speed-up to increase productivity while losing millions of jobs. All of these attacks, and many more, are paying for the imperialist occupation of Iraq and the fascist Homeland Security police state.

Low-wage immigrant workers make up 62% of the city's estimated 267,000 workers currently earning less than $7.10 an hour. The largest immigrant employer is the restaurant industry, with some 125,000 workers, many at or below today's minimum wage. A large number are home-care attendants.

"We know that immigrants are the people…at the base of the service industry," said Ana Maria Archila, executive director of the Latin American Integration Center. She added, "They are the people that bring food to our tables, that clean our houses, that take care of our babies and…are less covered by protections."

The state's minimum wage matches the federal rate, $5.15. Neither has been raised in five years. James Parrott, an economist who prepared the study, said the purchasing power of the current minimum wage is actually 40% below what it was when it was first enacted. That means it has actually dropped to $3.10 an hour in terms of purchasing power! Meanwhile, profits for U.S. corporations jumped 29% in the last quarter, the "biggest jump in almost 20 years" (Wall Street Journal, 3/26). That's capitalism: the bosses get richer and the poor get laid off!

The study identified Dominicans as the largest bloc of low-wage immigrant workers, 18% of the total of the 377,200 earning below $10 an hour. The next-largest blocs were Mexicans (13.7%), Chinese (6%) and Jamaicans (5.7%).

As much as we need it, a decent wage won't end wage slavery, fascist terror or imperialist war. The union leaders and immigration rights organizers will use the fight for a higher minimum wage to line workers up behind Kerry and the Democrats, and their plans for U.S. imperialist world domination.

We can use this fight to show that under capitalism, based on profits, racism and exploitation, workers can NEVER receive more than a small fraction of the value we create. Most is siphoned off in profits by the bosses, bankers and landlords. Workers can only be free by fighting for a communist society that will abolish wage slavery. Join immigrant and citizen workers on May Day to march with the PLP for a society without any bosses and where production serves our needs.✪

MASSES MARCH AGAINST WAR IN IRAQ

KERRY-BETTER-THAN BUSH ILLUSION WON'T DEFEAT IMPERIALISM

I was at the New York City March 20 anti-war march, part of the international day of protest on the first anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Iraq. According to the organizers and even right-wing newspapers, there were some 100,000 protesters. Having been at the Feb. 2003 march to the UN, just before the war began, I know this one was considerably smaller. So were other marches around the world. Part of this decrease stems from many people who consider themselves "progressives" and were adamantly opposed to the invasion, feeling conflicted about what should happen now.

I helped my union organize for the march, leading to lots of discussions. Many people who marched last year now feel the U.S. must stay to "clean up the mess it caused." Many believe withdrawing troops now would lead to a sectarian bloodbath. The U.S. occupation, while based on lies about Weapons of Mass Destruction and about "ties to terrorism" and which shouldn't have happened, is now "temporarily necessary," they say, to allow formation of a "representative government."

Many of these people, some who consider themselves leftists, not liberals, would prefer that the UN replace the U.S. occupation with a "multi-national peacekeeping force." This resembles Kerry's position, maintaining the occupation but "internationalizing" responsibility. One could clearly see at this year's rally and march that the bulk of the anti-war movement will be backing Kerry for President. Signs about "Bush's War" and "Regime Change Begins At Home" were abundant. Some posters were witty — "Let's Not Elect Bush Again in 2004." What's interesting is the virtual absence of visual support for Nader, and the real antagonism that many "on the left" have toward his candidacy because they feel he'll hand Bush the election.

Approaching November, the feeling will grow that Bush must be defeated and we should therefore mute criticism of Kerry. Many of our friends, while agreeing with our criticisms of Kerry — he voted for the war, the Patriot Act, NAFTA, dismantling welfare ... the list is long — believe Bush is "much worse," especially on "social" issues and must be dumped.

We need to address this liberalism — illusions about "building democracy in Iraq," the United Nations, the Democratic Party — in our literature, in study groups and maybe a column in CHALLENGE directly responding to these oft-heard positions. At the same time, realistically we know that many of our friends and co-workers may very well vote for Kerry. So, while we should patiently explain why we don't think that's a solution, we should also continue working with these friends to build a mass movement to oppose the rulers' attacks on our class.

A Red Marcher

March Spurs Students to Organize for May Day

On March 20, several local anti-war coalitions organized a march against the U.S. occupation of Iraq and called for the government to "bring home the troops." Thousands of demonstrators expressed their anger against the war in Iraq as well as the billions being spent to fund U.S. imperialism with the consequent cutbacks in healthcare, education and other social services The dominant sentiment was frustration with the Bush administration, blaming Bush for lying about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and his blatant anti-working class domestic policy. Many thought the solution was to replace Bush with Kerry.

PLP participated, distributing hundreds of CHALLENGES and thousands of leaflets. We agreed with the anger at Bush but pointed out that he's only an agent of the U.S. capitalist ruling class, which includes both the Republican and Democratic Parties.

The U.S. ruling class invaded and occupies Iraq to push their imperialist agenda. The billions spent on it shows their seriousness about pursuing their class interest at the expense of the U.S. and Iraqi working class. But replacing Bush with Kerry wouldn't solve the problem; it would simply change the face of the U.S. ruling class.

Our leaflet said that Kerry favors sending 40,000 more troops to Iraq. It's capitalism that must be replaced, requiring a revolutionary communist movement that fights to destroy it. In our leaflets and conversations we also explained that an important step towards this goal was marching on May Day. Several high school students participated with the PLP contingent. They were inspired by the positive reception to our leaflets and CHALLENGE. One student said this event gave her more energy to build for May Day.

West Coast Comrade

Workers Ahead of Anti-War Misleaders

A group of us at the March 20 anti-war march in New York City distributed Party's literature. A high school student, another comrade and myself quickly distributed and sold 115 copies of CHALLENGE and about 250 leaflets. We easily could have distributed double that amount.

I was impressed with how receptive the marchers were to the words I kept repeating in a bold voice as they passed: "This is CHALLENGE, the revolutionary communist newspaper. It's not just Bush, it's the capitalist system. You can't vote out capitalism. They have these elections, but afterwards, the capitalists always remain in power. We need revolution; we need workers' power."

People's eyes lit up as they stopped to take one and make a donation. On many occasions, they heard me and came over to request the paper. While a couple of people said, "We must get rid of Bush first," many more said, "You're right; it's the system."

Maybe I've missed a change among the workers by not having mass-distributed CHALLENGE in a while, but workers are more receptive to our paper! This is especially encouraging given the barrage of propaganda by the Democratic Party-led anti-war movement that's trying to steer working-class anger into these dead-end, pro-capitalist elections. My experience today shows me that the working class is more advanced than these misleaders. It gives me confidence in the road to revolution ahead.

Red Teacher

Thousands march in Gaza protesting the Israeli murder of the leader of Hamas by a missile fired from an Israeli Apache helicopter. Sharon wants to destroy Hamas before withdrawing Israeli troops from the Gaza strip. This is creating more instability and war. Just as the CIA originally groomed bin Laden, Hamas was built by Mossad, the Israel secret police. The latter used Hamas to counter the 1980s Intifada rebellion in the Occupied Territories and to oppose the leadership of the nationalist but secular PLO.

LETTERS

Everything We Do Counts

The 1991 Persian Gulf War reinforced my commitment to communist revolution. It was the first — but not the last — time I witnessed the power of imperialism, sending over a half million troops and state-of-the-art weapons of mass destruction to invade a country for profit. It moved me to action. I thought of all my friends and family who had received CHALLENGE before, or who might accept it if I offered. I wrote them an open letter and began mailing them papers which I have continued to this day. I have kept in touch with some of those folks in other ways, and some I haven't seen since. CHALLENGE remains our only connection.

Recently I paid a surprise visit to one of these old friends. I had invited her to May Day events several times with no success. Once I asked her if she would distribute more papers and she agreed to distribute two on her job. I didn't know if she still reads the paper, or what happened to those extra papers. I feared she would ask me to stop sending them.

We had an emotional reunion and spent several hours lovingly recalling old times of political anti-racist struggle, and how my old stomping grounds had changed. After a while, one of her co-workers stopped by, and she introduced him as one of the people who read CHALLENGE. I discovered he loved the paper. He spoke of the oppressive conditions in his country, Micronesia (a little-known group of islands in the Pacific Ocean), and the need for revolution worldwide.

When I asked if he knew anyone he could give the paper to, he said there were many, but he was afraid due to his immigration status. We worked out a plan and he asked for ten more. I now mail my old friend 13 papers instead of three.

I spent over ten years without contacting my friend, having my subjective doubts — those are my weaknesses. But the ten years of my friend reading the paper and distributing it to others is her strength, and the strength of CHALLENGE. Our paper has a life of its own, when we put it into the hands of the working class.

Red Baby Steps

'White Skin Privelege' Theory Boosts Racism

Recently two PLP members were invited to speak to a class at a state university on "white skin privilege." There's been much controversy on this campus about this topic. Some professors teach this idea while other professors and students are fighting against it. "White skin privilege" says whites are privileged because of their skin color and benefit from racism directed at non-whites. This theory is dominant in "left progressive" circles that deal with the issue of racism.

The PLP speakers explained that this dangerous theory ignores the nature of racism. The capitalist class has developed racism to justify the super-exploitation of black and Latino workers and divides them along racial lines. Thus, racism weakens the entire working class and allows the ruling class to oppress and exploit ALL workers, including whites.

Many in the class agreed but argued that racism still affects non-whites differently than whites. For example, if a white worker and a black worker were applying for a job, the white worker would have a better chance than the black worker. The PLP speakers agreed but pointed out that the white worker was still a worker and would be exploited at his job. They added that this example exposes the fact that "white skin privilege" shifts the focus away from the real benefactor of racism, the capitalist.

Another student who supported the "white skin privilege" theory argued that racism is so strong and ingrained in our lives that it's just something we must learn to live with. But since this dangerous theory obscures the class nature of racism, it actually cannot fight racism.

As long as capitalism exists, racism will have an economic and social necessity to exist. However, if we build a revolutionary movement to destroy capitalism, we'll eliminate the origin of racist ideas and practices. In building a movement against capitalism, we must and can fight racism to unite the working class.

Most students thanked the PLP speakers for coming and said they now had a better understanding of racism and the need to fight it. The class's professor told other colleagues to invite PLP speakers to their classes. But he questioned whether it was possible to build unity to fight racism.

It's clear that the "white skin privilege" theory is being pushed and has a strong effect but it can be taken on by presenting a revolutionary alternative. We will write more about the fight at this school against "white skin privilege" as we fight the racist budget cuts which are a direct result of the war in Iraq. In this way we plan to unite more students against this racist murderous capitalist system.

Two PL comrades

UAW, 'CAT' Bosses Partners-in-Crime

Underlying the hype about the recent strike vote by UAW members at Caterpillar lurks a grim reality: it ain't gonna happen! Strikes have been plentiful at Caterpillar and helped secure nearly every contract, but that's a bygone era when the UAW leaders had just enough leadership quality to listen to rank-and-file demands. UAW mis-leadership has digressed via "Quality Circles," "Employee Involvement Programs" and "Partnerships," into a species that requires neither vertebrae nor tolerance for resistance. UAW bureaucrats now view themselves as partners in helping the employers remain "competitive," even if it means lowering the standard of living for its members and assisting the industry in the wholesale slashing of their jobs.

UAW's history at Caterpillar has darkened in the last decade, in particular the ill-fated 1992 strike. The UAW walked out without a battle plan and voluntarily returned when scabs gave CAT the edge by crossing picket lines. Skilled Trades Unions aided CAT, performing maintenance on machinery allowing production to continue, further weakening the strike. The dispute lasted six years before a concessionary contract was reached. The betrayal of the members' sacrifices has left them with bitterness that will endure for generations.

When the UAW struck in 1992, Caterpillar sued the UAW over having to pay UAW reps that served on the shop floor in their "partnership." That suit may have meant the end of thousands of pork-chop positions throughout the UAW. The auto industry uses them to keep members in line and the UAW uses them to control elections, votes and the continuance of their lavish lifestyles, huge salaries and perks.

Also, more than 250 members were discharged during the dispute. Some never returned but the issue was dear enough to the membership that the contract was voted down twice.

At the 1995 AFL-CIO convention, UAW International President Yokich was questioned by Decatur UAW members about settling without protecting the fired heroes. He responded, "I am not going to hold up a contract for thousands of UAW members for a few hundred discharge cases." Yokich got an earful prior to being rescued. While Local 751 in Decatur was smaller than 974 in Peoria IL, the percentage of no-votes was high enough to twice turn down the contract until language was included to return most of the discharged members.

That result was due mainly to rank-and-file members who leafleted at plant gates, revealing the UAW sellout attempt. Despite 450 NLRB violations against Caterpillar, the UAW surrendered, dropping all the charges and allowing scabs to remain on the job. Caterpillar dropped their lawsuit.

When workers returned, CAT and the scabs made the workplace a living hell. The York, Pa. parts plant was closed and the work moved to North Carolina. Parts workers' wages were so low that UAW members in Denver, Colorado became eligible for food stamps. Caterpillar retirees suffered huge losses in benefits. During the CAT dispute, workers at John Deere suffered a concessionary settlement. The UAW claimed "victory" in those disputes.

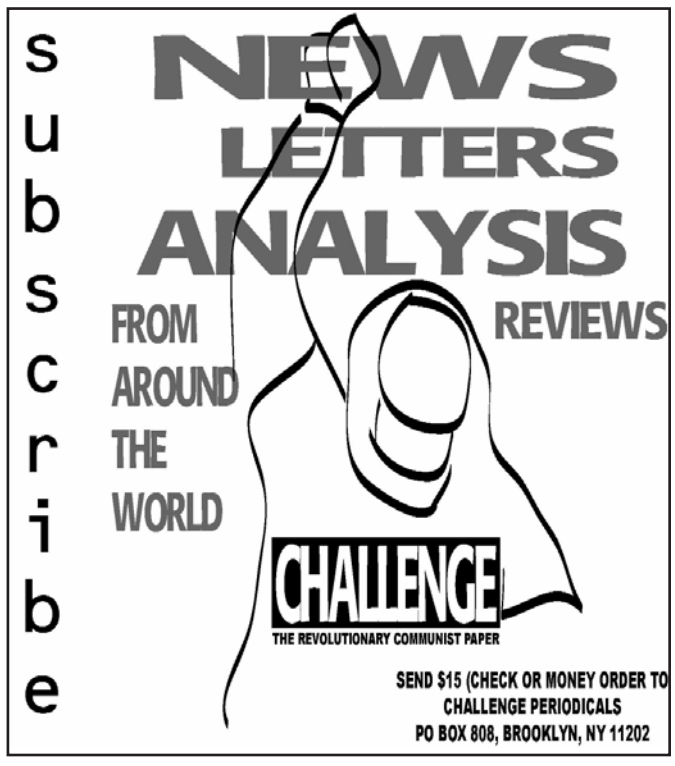
After the CAT struggle, the UAW agreed to spin-offs of the parts divisions at Visteon and Delphi at Ford and General Motors. That devastated UAW wages; thousands of UAW members lost their jobs. The CAT parts division was an omen of things to come.

Caterpillar has slowly divested itself in Illinois. Thousands of jobs have been outsourced to small parts suppliers and many have been moved south. Decatur CAT workers once numbered more than 5,000. Today, less than 1,600 remain. The "circus" is on between Caterpillar and the UAW but it amounts to little more than street theater. Strike? I seriously doubt it!

Decatur War Zone Vet

CHALLENGE comment: Thanks for your letter. This demonstrates that the class collaboration between the bosses and their labor lieutenants has hit high-paid industrial workers by laying off thousands permanently and increasing the productivity of those remaining, working them still harder for lower wages. This is one of the leading causes of the "jobless recovery." On the one hand, the bosses need workers in war industries to produce the weapons required to launch their imperialist adventures. But at the same time, they're squeezing these same workers to reap maximum profits, in the name of patriotism — "support the war against terror."

The real terror is the attack on workers such as at CAT, as well as on the entire international working class, from Iraq to Afghanistan to Illinois. Industrial workers in the U.S must unite with their brothers and sisters worldwide — not with their own bosses and union misleaders —to fight imperialist warmakers, the enemy of workers everywhere.



Gov't Terrorists Attack Immigrant Airport Workers

At our airport, two well-liked workers from El Salvador were fired because their green card information wasn't being processed fast enough. They were used as an example to control everyone else. The government and the bosses use "the war on terrorism" to intimidate and harass immigrant workers, randomly checking employee records.

We've been trying to get our working-class sisters reinstated, gathering information to help them and relaying it to the SEIU union office. SEIU is providing a lawyer. Our effort has been multi-racial and internationalist, involving black and Latin workers, who are native-born U.S., Salvadoran and Mexican. CHALLENGE is being distributed.

Through this struggle, I can show workers that as long as capitalism exists, bosses will have power to hire and fire workers. Under communism, workers will run the workplace and society in our interest. Worldwide communist revolution, from San Salvador to Chicago to London, will eliminate the bosses' racist and fascist attacks. March on May Day!

An airport comrade

WRONG CARTOON

In the March 31st CHALLENGE, a cartoon adjoining the health care article (page 4) could give the wrong impression that white workers benefit from racist medical care. We believe all forms of racism hurt ALL workers. Only the bosses benefit from racism, reaping super-profits and weakening working-class unity.✪

PL Students Expose Capitalism As Source of Sweatshops

ATLANTA Feb. 15 —Two comrades attended the United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS) national conference here. Besides meeting people and distributing literature, our other main goal was to win support for our proposal against university support for war and racism. Our proposal explained that the universities' essential function is to defend capitalism through the production of racist ideology and new weapons.

The Party has struggled at national and local USAS gatherings. We've advanced the need for anti-racist class struggle and communist revolution, versus the liberals' calls for "embarrassing" particular corporations and voting for the Democrats. This conference was no different.

Panel presentations included militant U.S. labor struggles around the 8-hour work-day and the current violence against union leaders at Colombia's Coca Cola plants. The common thread of capitalists using violence whenever necessary to maximize their profits was clear. Some students responded warmly to our championing the necessity of workers seizing power to end sweatshop conditions. We exchanged contact information with nearly everyone we met.

Not all was friendly. USAS invited AFL-CIO officials who lauded the unions and called for Bush's removal. We exposed these misleaders' sellouts of workers' struggles and support for wars against workers abroad.

At an all-black panel of union officials, a black comrade challenged the panelists claim to be anti-racist when the unions they run support the racist oil war in Iraq. Perhaps a fourth of the 300 students present applauded. A handful talked with us afterwards and we made more contacts. We used a leaflet and CHALLENGE to show that neither Kerry (the unions' choice) nor any other politician will stop imperialist war.

Before the plenary session to vote on proposals we had distributed 50 copies of our anti-war/anti-racism resolution to ensure rank-and-file USAS members would see it. At two previous conferences the USAS leadership prevented similar proposals from being discussed.

At the plenary, one comrade argued for the importance of our proposal, especially its campaigns against military research and recruitment on campus. The 70 remaining conference participants raised many questions, mostly about the details of its implementation rather than its politics. Unfortunately, eight of our nine contacts had already left for home. Our proposal was defeated by a large margin.

Even though it was voted down, we did get nearly everyone to read and consider its ideas and actions. Through personal conversations and bold distribution of over 100 pieces of literature, we spread revolutionary communist politics. We'll continue to advance the Party's ideas in our local USAS clubs and invite our contacts to May Day.✪

Salvador Election Circus Over, Workers' Problems Remain

SAN SALVADOR "I'm not going to vote because whoever wins, he won't change the situation," remarked a worker here. Like her, one-third of the eligible voters didn't vote in this electoral farce. Yet, more than two million people did. Millions of workers still have the illusion we can achieve a better life for ourselves and our families through elections.

Under the capitalist system there is no such thing as "democracy" or "free elections." There is only a dictatorship of the ruling class. The group of bosses led by the ARENA party and their friends, the U.S. imperialists (especially the Bushites now) used all their tricks to terrorize the population with lies and threats. U.S. representatives said that if the fmln (the leaders of the former guerrilla group) won, Salvadorans in the U.S. ran the risk of massive deportations of Salvadorans, ending the $2 billion+ they send to help maintain their families in El Salvador.

The bosses' press launched anti-communist attacks against the fmln and Shafik Handal and his gang — who were never communists — because these wannabe capitalists were allied with the Salvadoran capitalists who ultimately want to separate themselves from the U.S. imperialists and ally with their European rivals. In seeking this alliance, they aren't concerned with the workers' well-being, but want a bigger cut of the wealth Salvadoran workers produce.

One of their demands was to return the country's currency to the colon instead of the dollar. The U.S. wants to "dollarize" Latin America. The Europeans would like to "euro-ize" it. This is part of the fight over which currency will dominate the world. Also, the fmln supported the agricultural landlord oligarchy who are bankrupt and losing out to the industrial capitalists in their fight for dominance. Both groups of bosses have spilled rivers of workers' blood.

The misnamed "leftists" of the fmln never attacked capitalism as the main enemy. Instead Shafik Handal said capitalism could be improved. He promised deals with European and U.S. imperialists to benefit Salvadoran workers. With friends like this, we don't need enemies. Whether workers voted or didn't, they can see that in this farce, whichever political party gains power, the bosses are always the winners and the workers are the losers.

"The conditions for a new war continue to exist," said a Salvadoran farmworker. (LA Times, 3/22) But this time it must be a class war for real communism, a society based on production for the needs of the working class. We cannot achieve that goal through capitalist elections. We must build PLP as the real communist alternative to the misery and wars of the profit system. That goal can only be won through a revolution for workers' power.✪

RED EYE ON THE NEWS

BELOW ARE EXCERPTS FROM MAINSTREAM NEWSPAPERS THAT CONTAIN IMPORTANT INFORMATION:Abbreviations: NYT=New York Times, GW=Guardian Weekly (UK)

Democracy in action

As Jay Leno noted, the choices in the presidential election range all the way from a rich, white guy from Yale to a rich white guy from Yale. (NYT, 3/20)

Poor have more distress

Residents of the city's low-income neighborhoods suffer the highest rates of emotional distress, new Health Department figures show….

"We know there is a close correlation between poverty and mental health," said Health Commissioner Thomas Frieden….

The statistics, which also break out figures by ethnic groups, say a shocking 10 percent of Hispanic high school students attempted suicide in the past year….

…36 percent of New Yorkers who have jobs report significant emotional distress. For the unemployed, the figure is 60 percent. (NY Post, 3/24)

Powell soothes dictators

Kuwait, March 29 — Secretary of State Colin L. Powell sought this weekend to allay the furor in the Middle East over the Bush administration's proposed democracy initiative for the region, assuring the leaders of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia that there was no intention to impose reforms on their countries….

A resolution calling for democratic reform…stirred an uproar when a copy was leaked to an Arabic-language newspaper. (NYT, 3/21)

Eco-spiel aims at workers

Listen to any politician and the spiel goes something like this: "We must become more flexible and dynamic. Rigidities in the economy must be eliminated so that we can be more competitive when facing the new global challenge…."

Translate…into plain English. "We must become more flexible [accept lower wages] and dynamic [enjoy fewer in-work benefits]. Rigidities [trade unions and welfare states] must be eliminated so that we can be more competitive [companies can make bigger profits and pay less tax] when facing the new global challenge [if you don't like it buster, there are plenty of people …willing to take your job]." (MG, 3/31]

LONDON, England, March 20th—*Anti-war protestors scaled Big Ben to display banners in opposition to the Iraq war*

Haiti exposes US lies

This coup [in Haiti] sends a chilling message to leaders across the world. Turns out all that rhetoric about supporting democracy as a centerpiece of U.S. policy is just words, not policy.

This administration values governments that protect private investment and stability for U.S. multinationals. Stable dictatorships are preferred to unstable democracies….

[It's] all for elections, but only if they come out the right way. (Tribune Media, 3/2)

Chicago schools' no-pass fails

The Chicago Board of Education voted yesterday to ease some of the strict promotion requirements that have served as a model for Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg's plan to end social promotion in New York City's schools.

The action in Chicago came in anticipation of new research expected to show that Chicago's seven-year effort to end social promotion had not raised test scores for third graders and in most cases resulted in lower test scores for sixth graders….

The Chicago board voted yesterday to create an intensive reading program for schools with large numbers of failing students that would include full-day kindergarten, smaller classes in lower grades and mandatory summer school. (NYT, 3/25)

More troops to Africa

US special forces have arrived in several north African countries over recent months amid Pentagon warnings that the region runs the risk of becoming an al-Qaida recruiting ground and a possible back door into Europe….

US army's 10th Special Forces Group are [sic] already installed, or are due to arrive, in Mauritania, Mali, Chad and Niger to train their armies in anti-terrorism tactics and to improve coordination with the US military….

US generals…have been touring the region looking for temporary bases and airfields to use in possible operations in Africa. (GW, 3/24)

Gov't twisted 9/11 to Iraq

Very early on the morning of Sept. 12….Mr. Clarke, President Bush's former counter-terrorism chief, writes:…

"I expected to go back to a round of meetings examining what the next attacks could be, what our vulnerabilities were….Instead I walked into a series of discussions about Iraq. At first I was incredulous that we were talking about something other than getting Al Qaeda. Then I realized with almost a sharp physical pain that Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz were going to try to take advantage of this national tragedy to promote their agenda about Iraq…."

"I was once again taken aback, incredulous, and it showed. 'But, Mr. President, Al Qaeda did this.'

"'I know, I know, but…see if Saddam was involved. Just look. I want to know any shred….'"

The president wanted war with Iraq…. (NYT, 3/26)

Italy, World War 2:
REDS DEFEATED NAZIS, CAPITALISTS KEPT CONTROL

In our last issue we described how at the end of World War II, the communist-led Resistance had seized all of northern Italy, defeated 14 German divisions (which had taken over for the fading Mussolini fascists) and controlled the region's major cities. Yet the communists did not attempt to lead the working class to the revolutionary seizure of power. The reasons lay in the nationalist errors and weaknesses of the old communist movement. Its ultimate collapse was a defeat the international working class is still paying for.

U.S. and British imperialism, although allied with the Soviet Union, viewed Italy as "their province." To prevent the communists from running post-war Italy, they wanted to insure that the Nazis surrendered to U.S. and British forces, not to the communist-led Resistance, and that the Resistance would be disarmed.

The capitalists feared communist revolution and even viewed Mussolini as the "alternative to a Communist Italy." In his memoirs, Churchill wrote, "Even when the issue of the war [Allied victory] became certain, Mussolini would have been welcomed by the allies."

Despite the successes of the Resistance in the North, the main objective was not communist revolution but to have the Communist Party of Italy (CPI) "accepted" in a "parliamentary democracy." Since the mid-1930's, the international communist movement had pursued the "United Front Against Fascism," opportunistically uniting with the "liberal" sections of the ruling classes against the "reactionary" wings, especially against Hitler. During this struggle within the world communist movement, Palmiro Togliatti defeated the more militant wing of the CPI who had sought a more revolutionary course. He spent the early years of the war in Moscow but returned to Italy on March 26, 1944 to direct the Party, and carry out that policy, in the waning year of the war.

To the CPI, the Resistance was a tool to defeat fascism, not to make revolution. Togliatti advocated "national liberation" to free Italy from fascism. The seizure of power in the North was "suicide," given the presence of the Allied armies in the South, which Togliatti feared would attack the Partisians if they pursued revolution in the North. "The Italian road to Socialism" led the CPI to join the royal "anti-fascist" government the Allies had established in the South, a policy backed by Stalin and the Soviets in the name of unity with the Allies. Togliatti told the Party in June 1944:

"…the insurrection that we want has not got the aim of imposing social and political transformations in a socialist or communist sense. Its aim is rather national liberation and the destruction of Fascism. All the other problems will be resolved by the people tomorrow, once Italy is liberated, by means of a free popular vote and the election of a Constituent Assembly." (Quoted in Paul Ginsborg: "A Contemporary History of Italy," Penguin Books, 1990; p. 43)

The CPI proposed a continuation of the wartime unity of all forces that wanted a "democratic and progressive Italy." (Ginsborg, p. 43) Many communists in the North felt it was wrong to postpone advocacy of revolutionary goals. Many of them figured that when the Allies left, Togliatti would pursue those goals. They continued fighting and defeating the Nazis, leading to the take-overs described. But pressure from the Togliatti leadership combined with a threatened denial of arms and supplies from the Allies led them to drop their demands and sign onto the "Protocols of Rome" in December 1944, agreeing not to pursue an independent revolutionary state in the North.

The Allies promised money, food, clothing and arms in exchange for the CPI subordinating itself to the Supreme Allied Command (Eisenhower), following orders of the military government both before and after liberation. The two-stage strategy — liberation first, social and political reform (not revolution) later — "caused them [the CPI] to dissipate the strength of the Resistance and of worker and peasant agitation. As a result they were completely outflanked by the Allies and by the conservative forces in Italian society." (Ginsborg, p. 47)

ITALY — A general strike last November

The U.S. and Britain vigorously pursued their imperialist interests. They told the Resistance to "lay low" in the winter of 1944-45 and began reducing arms shipments to them (although the Partisans captured many weapons from the Nazis). Allen Dulles, head of the OSS (forerunner of the CIA), met secretly with the commander of all Nazi forces in Northern Italy in Switzerland in March 1945. Dulles told them to remain in position and surrender only to U.S.-British forces, while maintaining all public utilities and essential services. However, thousands of German soldiers fled, and the Nazi generals wound up surrendering to the Resistance (see last issue).

But within four weeks of the Nazi surrender, two-thirds of the Partisans turned over their weapons to the U.S. and British armies and gave up their rule to the military government. The Allies remained in Italy until the end of 1945 to re-establish a police force they controlled, drawn mainly from wartime fascists.

The degeneration of the CPI is now history. "Sharing" power in a capitalist state means subordinating communist revolution to capitalist dictatorship. Communists who try to "share power" with capitalists will discover that capitalists NEVER share power with communists. Nationalism and cooperating with the "liberal" wing of the ruling class guarantees the maintenance of capitalist rule. Smashing the bosses' state apparatus and erecting a communist-led workers' state is the only road to workers power.

(A future article will discuss: the imperialists' sabotaging of the Soviets' fight on the Eastern Front; the Vatican's post-war role in helping the U.S. save Nazi war criminals; the CIA/Vatican/Mafia anti-communist Axis and the deal with Lucky Luciano to open up the drug trade via Italy to the U.S.; the rebellion of U.S. GIs in Italy against being sent to fight the Cold War in Asia; and how the Communists' opportunism blunted the revolutionary struggle in the name of the "United Front" against Hitler and led to the defeat of the old international communist movement, even as the Soviets virtually single-handedly smashed Hitler's armies.)✪

Workers Can't Take Sides in U.S.-Euro Dogfight

The defeat of Aznar's right-wing Popular Party in Spain after the terrorist bombing in Madrid and the victory of the PSOE (Socialist Workers Party of Spain) have scared the pro-U.S. rulers in Europe (Italy, Poland and even Tony Blair). Zapatero, Spain's new Prime Minister, is threatening to pull Spanish troops out of Iraq unless the UN oversees the occupation. Influenced by events in Spain, on March 20 two million marched in Rome and other cities against the war, the biggest of the worldwide protests held that day. Italy's Prime Minister Berlusconi not only is confronting a massive anti-war movement, but also rising working-class militancy.

A general strike on March 26 — the third against Berlusconi in a year — filled the piazzas of Rome, Milan and other cities with workers and pensioners protesting his pension "reform," which will raise the retirement age.

All this occurs in the context of the imperialist rivalry shaping world events. The building of a new international communist movement to prepare workers, soldiers and youth to fight all the bosses and crush them all with revolution is the only way out of this endless wars/fascist hell. Slowly PLP is being built in many areas. The following are excerpts from a CHALLENGE flyer distributed by PLP comrades in Italy.

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Economic rivalry between the different capitalist nations is growing. This contradiction won't be solved by negotiations, but by war. The U.S. is the shark inside the imperialist aquarium, but all the others are not just watching; they're organizing themselves. The European imperialists are preparing to face the U.S. economically and militarily. Central to this competition is the control of oil, still the engine of the world economy.

Anti -war demonstrations in Chile

We shouldn't be tricked by "left" reformist governments who promise a "new deal." They'll be the same or worse than Berlusconi. The "left" government favored bombing Yugoslavia. The DS (Left Democrats), led by former "Communist" Party of Italy leaders, refuses to sign a parliamentary resolution to get Italian troops out of Iraq, saying it will hamper future "peacekeeping" activities in Kosovo and Afghanistan. DS chief Fassini was booed and physically kicked out of Rome's March 20 anti-war protest by angry workers and youth. Meanwhile, Bernitoni, head of the RC group that "re-founded" the CPI, is no better. He's adopted a Gandhi-type pacifism, opposing any militant workers' violent struggles, saying they're as bad as the bosses' or terrorists' violence.

The workers suffering the most now are in the Middle East, but eventually European workers will be affected with wage cuts and military destruction. Many workers are being called to the army and losing their lives fighting for the capitalists in Iraq. They're dying not only at the front but also of cancer afterwards from depleted uranium that's poisoning thousands.

Anti-Americanism is powerful in the pacifist/anti-globalization movement. This movement views France as an ally, seen by the fake left as a "good" capitalist country, the example of bourgeois opposition to U.S. imperialism. But this "opposition" is merely capitalists fighting each other over Iraq, a contradiction between these two capitalist leaderships. We shouldn't support these French capitalists who are a leading, murderous imperialist class. Anti-Americanism is not an answer. It means siding with European imperialists and dividing us from U.S. workers. This is a mistake. U.S. workers will organize movements like their fight against imperialist war in Vietnam.✪